

# The Schedule and Abstract Booklet for the Everyday Reading of Literature (EROL) Symposium

Schedule notes: Both days follow the same scheduling, starting with registration which will be available from 8 AM to 9 AM at D4, one of the two presentation halls dedicated to the symposium. Later, during both days, participants will also be able to register or take breaks in another smaller room, A-102, which will be available from 8 AM to 4 PM.

The bulk of the schedule consists of four sessions, each featuring four presenters divided into two halls (D3 and D4). The two presenters per hall will have a joint 1-hour slot in which to give their talks, with a suggested duration of 20 minutes each. After both presenters in the same slot conclude their talks, the remaining time will be dedicated to questions and discussion. The presentations will begin at 9 AM on both days (September 1 and 2), and end at 4 PM with a one-hour keynote talk, with two breaks in between.

After the keynotes on both days, a separate student symposium called *Lessons on Reading Everything* or LORE will commence. It will be held primarily in Croatian at a separate location, the Booksa Literary Club at Martićeva 14D, and everyone is invited to attend if they wish.

The tables below present the schedule with visually separated joint slots. Note that in presentations where more than one presenter has been announced, only one is credited to enable an easier overview of the tables.

Sept. 1			
Time	Room	Presenter	Presentation / Activity
8-9	D4	PoKUS team	<i>Registration</i>
8:45-9	D3	PoKUS team	Symposium opening
9-10	D4	Elsje Fourie	Global Novels, Global Readers? Imagining transnational communities along the circuits of global literary consumption
9-10	D4	Sara Tanderup Linkis	Everyday Listening: How Audiobooks Transform Uses and Experiences of Literature
9-10	D3	DeNel Rehberg Sedo	Memoir Reading, Remembering, Reflecting on Social Media
9-10	D3	Martina Domines	Reading the trauma of eating disorders: Marya Hornbacher's <i>Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia</i> (2006) and Elena and Claire Dunkle's <i>Elena Vanishing</i> (2015)
10-11	D4	Alison Brown	Bound together: Understanding the wellbeing potential of participation in shared reading
10-11	D4	Patrick Errington	No Such Thing as Neutral: How Anticipated Reading Tasks Shape the 'Everyday' Reading of Poetry
10-11	D3	Antonia Vogler	Compassionate Connections: The Role of Perspective-Taking and Pronouns in Shared Reading Groups
10-11	D3	Julija Ovsec	What do we feel when we read: Interpretation of Results of the Readers Survey
11-11:30	A-102	Break	<i>Refreshments</i>
11:30-12:30	D4	Moniek Kuijpers	Online Shared Reading Practices of Young Adults: A Q-Methodology Interview Study
11:30-12:30	D4	Anna Murashova	Online platforms and everyday reading: the Russian case
11:30-12:30	D3	Corinne Sandwith	Performative Citation and Everyday Reading: Towards a History of Black Reading Cultures in Colonial South Africa
11:30-12:30	D3	Seyma Gumus	Reading as an Everyday Practice in Nigar Hanım's Diaries and the Question of Female Readership in the late 19th Century Ottoman Literature
12:30-14		Lunch break	<i>Lunch</i>
14-15	D4	Guido Bartolini	Everyday Reading of Complicity in Fiction about World War II Occupation in Flanders
14-15	D4	Antonia Došen	Reading Habits of Jewish Families in Zagreb Between the Two World Wars
14-15	D3	Ho Ting Chan	The Quest of Life: The commentary of Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji 妙復軒評石頭記 in Qing dynasty
14-15	D3	Álvaro Ceballos Viro	Reader's Finest Selection: Private Poetry Anthologies as Sources for Reception History
15-16	D3	Rita Felski	Keynote talk: Expert Readers / Amateur Readers: Applying The Principle Of Symmetry

Sept. 2			
Time	Room	Presenters	Presentation / Activity
8-9	D4	PoKUS team	<i>Registration</i>
8:30-9	D3	PoKUS team	PoKUS presentation
9-10	D4	Lukas Kosch	The Transformation of Everyday Reading: Consequences of Modality and Materiality for Literary Reading Practices
9-10	D4	Petra Bago	Comparing Human and AI Literary Summaries: Insights from Lapitch
9-10	D3	Kanupriya Dhingra	Library Lives: Everyday Reading and Cultural Change in Delhi
9-10	D3	Joanna Maj	Reading as a Tourist Performance
10-11	D4	Janet Handley	Engaging with political violence in fiction: readers, readings, and responses
10-11	D4	Victoria Pöhls	"I don't know why that most horrible part comes up to me now" - Readers (Dis)Engagement with Texts representing Child Sexual Abuse
10-11	D3	Ana Vogrinčič Čepič María Angélica Thumala	The materiality of reading and its affective implications in people's everyday lives
10-11	D3	Olave	Remediation and attachment in the reading of eBooks. Illustrations from the United Kingdom.
11-11:30	A-102	Break	<i>Refreshments</i>
11:30-12:30	D4	Ave Palm	"good book it made me want to die": The Affected and Affective Readings of a Controversial Early-20th-Century Queer Tragedy
11:30-12:30	D4	Colette Gordon	Enter Reading: Social Reading and the Early Modern Playtext
11:30-12:30	D3	Elena Prat	Identifying reading emotions: quali-quantitative study of a corpus of testimonies from French contemporary readers
11:30-12:30	D3	Malcolm Noble	Using affective bibliographical methods to recover everyday queer reading of <i>Heartstopper</i>
12:30-14		Lunch break	<i>Lunch</i>
14-15	D4	Jane Qian Liu	Reading The Sorrows of Young Werther in Early Twentieth-century China
14-15	D4	Ze Yu	Global Narratives, Local Interpretations: A Comparative Study of Reader Response on Qidian and WebNovel
14-15	D3	Carrie Timlin	Virginia Woolf and the New Common Reader
14-15	D3	Robin-M. Aust	Bragging about books you have(n't) read – Thomas Bernhard's library and the performance of erudition
15-16	D4	Astrid Erll	Keynote talk: Memory Studies in Search of the Reader

## Keynote talks:

### Rita Felski: **Expert Readers / Amateur Readers: Applying The Principle Of Symmetry**

How can we most effectively challenge the opposition of professional and non-professional reading? Postcritique has been accused of treating readers as if they are all the same, devaluing intellectual expertise and abandoning aesthetic judgment. This claim, however, is mistaken: postcritique does not argue for sameness but for symmetry: treating different groups of readers equally. My talk clarifies what such a symmetrical perspective involves and surveys some recent literary-critical examples.

Rita Felski is John Stewart Bryan Professor of English at the University of Virginia, former Niels Bohr Professor at the University of Southern Denmark, and former editor of *New Literary History*. Her most recent books are *Uses of Literature* (2008), *The Limits of Critique* (2015), *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (2020) and a co-edited collection *Love Etc: Essays on Contemporary Literature and Culture* (2024). She is finishing a book called *Reading with the New Frankfurt School*.

### Astrid Erll: **Memory Studies in Search of the Reader**

Intersections between memory and literature are manifold: The reading of literature can be part of our episodic or semantic memory. There is the fact that literary narratives may provide schemata for our experience and memory. And there are the many ways in which literature can shape—and change—how we remember historical events as well as “other people’s pasts.”

Literature is obviously an important co-productive force in the making of “collective memory” (a term derived from sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and used in Memory Studies today for all forms of “memory across the mind and the wild”). And the act of reading seems to be very switchboard between the potential memory of the literary archive and the actualized, ever-changing memories that unfold their power in memory cultures. No wonder that Memory Studies, ever since its interdisciplinary and international formation in the early 2000s, has been “in search of the reader.”

My lecture provides an overview of Memory Studies approaches to the everyday reading of literature. A wide variety of methods has been used in order to understand the mnemonic dimensions of reading and the role of the reader within memory culture—ranging from close reading, discourse analysis, and intermedial analysis to interviews, focus group discussions, and survey

studies. I will discuss work on the reception and remediation of historical fiction, on prosthetic memory and vicarious trauma, on translation and transcultural memory, and on literature as a source of mnemonic schemata.

Astrid Erll is professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Goethe University Frankfurt and founder of the Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform ([www.memorystudies-frankfurt.com](http://www.memorystudies-frankfurt.com)). She is co-editor of the book series *Media and Cultural Memory* (De Gruyter, with A. Nünning, since 2004) and *Studies in Collective Memory* (Oxford UP, with J. Olick, since 2024). Her publications include *Memory in Culture* (Palgrave 2011), *Travels in Time* (OUP 2025), and *Cognition, Culture, and Political Momentum: Breaking Down the Silos on Collective Memory Research* (ed. with W. Hirst, OUP 2025, in press).

Alphabetical list of speakers and presentations:

Robin-Martin Aust / Marie-Christine Boucher / Juliane Werner: **Bragging about books you have(n't) read – Thomas Bernhard's library and the performance of erudition**

Petra Bago: **Comparing Human and AI Literary Summaries: Insights from Lapitch**

Guido Bartolini: **Everyday Reading of Complicity in Fiction about World War II Occupation in Flanders**

Alison Brown: **Bound together: Understanding the wellbeing potential of participation in shared reading**

Álvaro Ceballos Viro: **Reader's Finest Selection: Private Poetry Anthologies as Sources for Reception History**

Ho Ting Chan: **The Quest of Life: The commentary of Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji 妙復軒評石頭記 in Qing dynasty**

Kanupriya Dhingra: **Library Lives: Everyday Reading and Cultural Change in Delhi**

Martina Domines: **Reading the trauma of eating disorders: Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (2006) and Elena and Claire Dunkle's *Elena Vanishing* (2015)**

Antonia Došen / Mihaela Cik / Martina Jurišić: **Reading Habits of Jewish Families in Zagreb Between the Two World Wars**

Patrick Errington: **No Such Thing as Neutral: How Anticipated Reading Tasks Shape the 'Everyday' Reading of Poetry**

Elsje Fourie: **Global Novels, Global Readers? Imagining transnational communities along the circuits of global literary consumption**

Colette Gordon: **Enter Reading: Social Reading and the Early Modern Playtext**

Seyma Gumus: **Reading as an Everyday Practice in Nigar Hanım's Diaries and the Question of Female Readership in the late 19th Century Ottoman Literature**

Janet Handley: **Engaging with political violence in fiction: readers, readings, and responses**

Lukas Kosch: **The Transformation of Everyday Reading: Consequences of Modality and Materiality for Literary Reading Practices**

Moniek Kuijpers / Pema Frick: **Online Shared Reading Practices of Young Adults: A Q-Methodology Interview Study**

Jane Qian Liu: **Reading The Sorrows of Young Werther in Early Twentieth-century China**

Joanna Maj: **Reading as a Tourist Performance**

Anna Murashova: **Online platforms and everyday reading: the Russian case**

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Julija Ovsec: **What do we feel when we read: Interpretation of Results of the Readers Survey**

Ave Palm: **“good book it made me want to die”: The Affected and Affective Readings of a Controversial Early-20th-Century Queer Tragedy**

Victoria Pöhls / Aleksandra Milenovic: **“I don't know why that most horrible part comes up to me now” - Readers (Dis)Engagement with Texts representing Child Sexual Abuse**

Elena Prat: **Identifying reading emotions: quali-quantitative study of a corpus of testimonies from French contemporary readers**

DeNel Rehberg Sedo: **Memoir Reading, Remembering, Reflecting on Social Media**

Corinne Sandwith: **Performative Citation and Everyday Reading: Towards a History of Black Reading Cultures in Colonial South Africa**

Sara Tanderup Linkis / Julia Pennlert: **Everyday Listening: How Audiobooks Transform Uses and Experiences of Literature**

María Angélica Thumala Olave: **Remediation and attachment in the reading of eBooks. Illustrations from the United Kingdom**

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Ana Vogrinčič Čepič: **The materiality of reading and its affective implications in people's everyday lives**

Ze Yu: **Global Narratives, Local Interpretations: A Comparative Study of Reader Response on Qidian and WebNovel**

[Robin-Martin Aust / Marie-Christine Boucher / Juliane Werner](#)

Bielefeld University / Bielefeld University / University of Vienna

[robin-martin.aust@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:robin-martin.aust@uni-bielefeld.de) / [marie-christine.boucher@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:marie-christine.boucher@uni-bielefeld.de) / [juliane.werner@univie.ac.at](mailto:juliane.werner@univie.ac.at)

### **Bragging about books you have(n't) read – Thomas Bernhard's library and the performance of erudition**

“Bookishness” has become an Internet aesthetic, with booktokers/-tubers using their stylized libraries as the backdrop for presentations and showing off their book collections to their viewers. A common (often misogynistic) criticism of this practice is the perceived lack of literary expertise displayed—the implication being that these books are collected but not read (cf. Reichwein 2017, Maye/Jungen 2011). On the other hand, “performing the bookshelf” is not exclusive to social media: Building a library, especially talking about (and) owning books is a means of accumulating cultural capital; “performing bookishness” is central to how writers establish themselves in the literary marketplace.

We use this observation as the point of departure for a case study on the book collection and reading practices of one of the most prolific German-language authors of the 20th century: Thomas Bernhard. While he might at first glance seem to be as far from the cliché of a bookfluencer as one can be, feuilleton and research ceaselessly emphasize that he, too, may in fact not have read the books about which he spoke. Bernhard ambivalently describes himself and many of his protagonists as well-read, as reluctant readers or simply as ‘talented page-turners’ (*Alte Meister*, p. 39; cf. Billenkamp 2008). This evokes questions about the social dimension of reading and collecting books: Who gets taken seriously as a reader, and why? What factors are contributing to the criticism of the young, often female booktoker amassing books and the recognition given to ‘men of letters’ building a library, despite both groups performing similar practices?

The aim of this presentation is to analyze the dynamics and symbolic meaning of owning and reading books, in Bernhard's writing and his own performance as a well-read author. We examine this through three perspectives, ranging from hermeneutic close-reading to digital distant-reading approaches:

- **Material Library:** We show statistics about Bernhard's private library—recently transferred to the Austrian Academy of Sciences—as well as examples from single books in his collection: What are the books that make up this library, books that he—potentially—did read? Are there records of acquiring and collecting or traces of reading these books?



- **Fictional Library:** What, on the other hand, are the books mentioned in his writings? Which authors are mentioned to characterize his protagonists as intellectuals, thus reinforcing his reputation as an erudite? Using Named Entity Recognition (NER) on Bernhard's texts and the (meta-)data compiled by the Forschungsstelle Thomas Bernhard at the Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities and Cultural Heritage (ACDHCH), we analyze and visualize the intertextual network and overlap between Bernhard's real-world library and his fictional collection of books.

- **Reception:** Bernhard's relentless (auto-)fictional and public self-staging had the effect of eclipsing the individual behind a fictionalized persona (cf. Götze 2014/ Götze 2018/ Wegmann 2020) —thereby creating the ground for his intertextual 'afterlife' in the works of other authors (cf. Aust 2024 / Werner 2022). Contemporary lay readers, translators and writers all over the world, in turn, not only tackle their reading of Bernhard, but perform their own erudition on social media by staging their admiration for his work.

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Petra Bago

University of Zagreb

[pbago@ffzg.hr](mailto:pbago@ffzg.hr)

### **Comparing Human and AI Literary Summaries: Insights from Lapitch**

This paper investigates how human versus AI-generated (artificial intelligence generated) summaries compare when applied to Ivana Brlić Mažuranić's *The Brave Adventures of Lapitch* in its Croatian version. Our core objective is to compare five different summaries – three authored by human contributors (sourced from [lektira.hr](http://lektira.hr), [lektire.hr](http://lektire.hr), and [sjedi5.com](http://sjedi5.com)) and two produced by a large language models (LLMs) (ChatGPT) – through a computational lens focusing on sentence length, lexical diversity, and text similarity.

Although LLMs are rapidly reshaping the study of literature, the ways they process and synthesize narrative structures remains a crucial research topic. To generate summaries of book-length texts, Chang et al. (2024) demonstrate how LLMs leverage

chunking strategies – whether hierarchical merging or incremental updating – which significantly influences narrative clarity, illustrating both the promise and pitfalls of handling extended contexts. Additional research (Kim et al. 2024) examines deeper questions of faithfulness, highlighting the importance of maintaining narrative integrity when models summarize texts extending beyond their context windows. Meanwhile, Yu, Liu, and Xiong (2024) introduce a specialized dataset for machine understanding of long-form fiction, using LLM-based question-answering and summary tasks to underscore AI’s (in)capacity for deep literary engagement. In parallel, a paper on Chinese poetry (Zhao, Wang, and Wang 2024) shows that LLMs can detect nuanced poetic techniques, which paves the way towards advancing the refinement of AI systems toward more sophisticated literary output. Moreover, Yuan et al. (2024) look specifically at character-focused analysis, showing how LLMs manage to infer personality traits and relationships from minimal textual cues, though they sometimes overlook subtle or implicit hints. Finally, Jang and Jung (2024) venture into Korean science fiction, and provide a framework for profiling characters across multiple dimensions – attributes, events, and relationships – offering valuable insights into whether AI-summarized texts capture the essence of a character’s journey.

Building on these advances, our own study centers on Ivana Brlić Mažuranić’s “The Brave Adventures of Lapitch” in its Croatian version. We compare four distinct summaries: three written by human contributors (from [lektira.hr](http://lektira.hr), [lektire.hr](http://lektire.hr), and [sjedi5.com](http://sjedi5.com)), and one produced by an LLM (ChatGPT). Our goal is to illustrate the differences in structure, style, and interpretative depth between human and AI-authored summaries. Specifically, we conduct computational analyses of sentence length, lexical diversity, and text similarity to detect the qualitative and quantitative distinctions in how these summaries are composed. By juxtaposing human-crafted and AI-generated summaries, this paper aims to expand ongoing discussions about the role of LLMs in the everyday reading and interpretation of literature.

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Guido Bartolini

Ghent University

[Guido.Bartolini@UGent.be](mailto:Guido.Bartolini@UGent.be)

### **Everyday Reading of Complicity in Fiction about World War II Occupation in Flanders**

Fictional texts are fundamental vectors in the articulation of memory narratives about the past. By offering experiential perspectives on the life of rounded characters, novels invite readers to develop emotional engagements with the events of history, offering powerful platforms to reflect politically and ethically on the meaning of the past (Rigney 2008; Erl2011). Cultural memory studies and narratological scholarship has amply made the case for the ethical potential of literature. Literary texts can deepen our understanding of history by developing multi-layered and multivocal depictions of the past that foreground the agency of historical actors while addressing complex ethical dilemmas about individual, collective, and structural responsibility for injustices (Meretoja 2018; Mihai 2022). Despite the wide scholarship on literature's critical role in memory formation, empirical research on readers' perspectives remains minimal within the field of cultural memory studies (Ortner,

Andersen, and Borčak 2022; Meretoja 2022). This paper blends theory of cultural memory with empirical data stemming from a small-scale qualitative study of readers' responses that will be carried out at Ghent University in Spring 2025. Focusing on the novel *Will* by Jeroen Olyslaegers (2016), the paper will briefly outline a specialist discussion of the novel's "mnemonic potential" (Erll 2011), arguing that Olyslaegers' text carries out a powerful intervention on the memory of World War II occupation in Flanders by foregrounding the implication and complicity of the protagonist—a member of the Antwerp police—in the Holocaust. This interpretation will be compared with data from the empirical study, which will collect reading notes, one-to-one interviews, and a focus group discussion with university students who have no background in literary studies. The qualitative analysis of readers' responses will allow for an examination of potential discrepancies between the specialist's assessment of the novel's narrative potential and real readers' interactions with the text. Moreover, by comparing reading notes and interview responses with the discussions taking place during the focus group, the paper will explore whether, as some narratologists have suggested (Caracciolo and van Duuren 2015), the most transformative effects of the reading experience lie not in solitary engagement with the text but in the discussions it generates.

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Alison Brown

Dalhousie University

[AlisonBrown@Dal.Ca](mailto:AlisonBrown@Dal.Ca)

### **Bound together: Understanding the wellbeing potential of participation in shared reading**

On a drizzly and dark February afternoon, a small group of people gathers around a table, copies of Elizabeth Jennings' poem *Comfort* in hand. The group's facilitator, Claire, reads the poem aloud, slowly:

Hand closed upon another, warm.  
The other, cold, turned round and met  
And found a weather made of calm.  
So sadness goes, and so regret.  
A touch, a magic in the hand.  
Not that the fortune-teller sees  
Or thinks that she can understand.  
This warm hand binds but also frees.

A brief, comfortable silence falls before Claire asks if anyone would like to re-read the poem aloud. Max volunteers and reads the poem. Not all, but most of the group members then take a turn sharing where and how the poem resonates, what it prompts them to remember or to reconsider, drawing from their personal experiences and building on one another's perspectives and stories. Elaine repeats the phrase 'a weather made of calm' and remarks how rare that occurrence seems to be now. I talk about how my children used to hold my hand every day and the bittersweetness I feel now that they are older and holding other people's hands. Freya recalls a time when they were comforted – not with words, but with the gentle touch and presence of another – the dignity offered in just sitting side by side, much like it often is within this group.

This vignette offers a small glimpse of how, for many, the reading aloud and facilitated discussion of poetry and other literature in a community group setting is a site of comfort and connection (Longden et al., 2015). Poetry provides precise and wondrous language that informs but also connects, enacts, and creates (Prendergast et al., 2009). Founders of the shared reading model established reading groups with the conviction that collective engagement with poetry and literature can support personal, collective, and relational wellbeing (The Reader, n.d.).

With this presentation, I present findings from the poetic inquiry phase of my dissertation examining what happens when we bring a group of people together to read aloud and discuss literature. For me, the process of meaning production is as important as the meaning produced. In conducting a poetic inquiry, using poetry "as/in/for inquiry", I, as the researcher, become part of, and accountable for, circles of interconnected relations – relation to the topic, to research participants, to colleagues and collaborators, to the craft, and to the public (Faulkner, 2017, p. 210).

I present three sets of poems: found poems from the transcripts of conversations I had with shared reading group participants, found poems from the work of theorists whose scholarship extends our understanding of processes integral to shared reading, and threshold poems that weave together the voices of participants, theorists, and myself as the poetresearcher. Through these poems I reveal how the cultivated liminal space of shared reading engenders practices of recognition and listening otherwise which makes possible resonant relations of wellbeing (Turner, 1987; Felski, 2008; Lipari, 2009, 2014).

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Álvaro Ceballos Viro

Université de Liège

[A.CeballosViro@uliege.be](mailto:A.CeballosViro@uliege.be)

### **Reader's Finest Selection: Private Poetry Anthologies as Sources for Reception History**

Between approximately 1800 and 1950, a significant cultural practice emerged that paralleled the medieval *chansonniers*: ordinary readers transcribed poems of emotional or epistemological significance into personal notebooks by hand (cf. Heesen 2005), creating private anthologies. These collections offer a striking contrast to the established literary canon and linear narratives of literary history, uniquely blending high and low literature, incorporating works from different centuries, countries, and sometimes even languages.

What makes these private anthologies extraordinary is that they represent collections curated not according to historiographical or thematic criteria (as seen in commercial or critical anthologies), but based on some sort of personal *resonance* (Rosa 2016) these texts apparently had for individual readers. They share similarities with school practices (Escolano



2000, Eddy 2018), intimate writing, collectibles, German *Poesiealben* (Walter 2019), writers' reading notebooks (Minzertan 2016), and other everyday writing practices. Despite their cultural significance, these notebooks have received little scholarly attention and have never been studied systematically (Ceballos 2025: 227-230).

In my presentation, I will describe the distinctive features of these cultural artifacts, drawing on documents from my personal collection (16 notebooks in various languages), the collections of other reading historians (Jean-François Botrel, Christine Rivalan, Cecilio Alonso), and those held in the archive of the Interdisciplinary Seminar on Written Culture Studies (SIECE) at the University of Alcalá de Henares.

These anthologies often resist revealing what they meant to their owners and the uses – in Felski's sense – to which they were put. Key questions emerge: What do they tell us about the historical relationship between ordinary readers and the lyric genre? Do these individual selections reveal historical constants, or should they be categorized differently based on period or subject matter?

While these questions can be partly addressed through qualitative analysis combining theoretical tools from literary history and anthropology, I will also employ distant reading techniques (Underwood 2019) in order to identify thematic patterns specific to these notebooks. I will present the results of a topic modeling analysis of eight Spanish-language notebooks, using a reference corpus of several dozen Spanish poetic collections from the same period for comparison (using LDA and Top2Vec models, performed in Python and through the DARIAH-TopicsExplorer, following considerations from Henny 2016, Jelodar 2019, and Vayansky / Kumar 2020). The results reveal indeed a semantic coherence that can be interpreted as a homology of use.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the collective endeavor that reading historian Jean-François Botrel (2024) advocates: to *invent* new sources of documentation for the historical uses of literature, beyond traditional sources like *marginalia*, diaries, and letters.

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Ho Ting Chan

Independent Scholar

### **The Quest of Life: The commentary of Miao Fu Xuan *Píng Shi-tou Ji* 妙復軒評石頭記 in Qing dynasty**

Ping-dien (評點 critics) refers to a style of commentary in Chinese literature. After the mid-Ming dynasty, it became a popular literary trend among the elite, largely due to the emergence of *Liu Cai Zi Shu* (六才子書 Sixth Work of Genius), authored by Chin Sheng-tan 金聖歎(1608-1661). In Qing dynasty, Zhang Xinzhi 張新之 produced an exceptional commentary of *Honglou meng* (紅樓夢 The Story of the Stone), titled *Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji* (妙復軒評石頭記 Miao Fu Xuan's Comments on *The Story of the Stone*). This commentary posits a direct relationship between the classic and the *Yijing* (易經 The Classic of Change).

In 1882, the Sanjia Ben (三家本, Zhang-Yao-Wang-annotated edition) was published by Shanghai Shi Tong Wenshu Ju (上海同文書局), preserving both the literary text of *The Story of the Stone* and its commentaries as fictional annotations. The republication of this edition between 1888 and 1927 garnered significant support from a wide readership.

The elite believed that the hidden meanings within literary texts could be revealed through such critiques, thereby awakening readers' consciousness. The literati of the late Qing dynasty faced political turmoil and social upheaval, leading them to seek the answer of life. *Yijing*, the Book of Change, emphasizes that change is the only constant in the universe. Thus, it became a source of hope for the literati during this tumultuous period, elevating *Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji* as a prominent critique.

This paper will be divided into three parts: (1) The formation of the *Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji*; (2) The content of the *Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji*, particularly its connections to the *Yijing*, unveiling its religious and philosophical concepts; (3) The social and political background surrounding *Miao Fu Xuan Píng Shi-tou Ji*.

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Kanupriya Dhingra

BML Munjal University

[kanupriyadhingra.soas@gmail.com](mailto:kanupriyadhingra.soas@gmail.com)

### **Library Lives: Everyday Reading and Cultural Change in Delhi**

This paper examines the interplay between everyday reading practices and the diverse library cultures of Delhi from 1947 to the present. Through ethnographic research conducted across various library spaces—including institutional libraries such as the Delhi Public Library and Hardayal Municipal Library, specialized repositories like Sahitya Akademi and Teen Murthy Library, community-driven initiatives like Mridula Koshy's Community Library Project, and informal reading rooms popular among migrant students—I analyse how these spaces shape, facilitate, and reflect daily reading behaviours and social interactions.

Historically, Delhi's public library culture emerged comparatively late, notably marked by the establishment of the Delhi Public Library in 1954 through a UNESCO partnership. Despite this delayed beginning, Delhi's libraries evolved distinctively, becoming vibrant spaces for informal intellectual exchange, leisurely reading, archival research, and community engagement.

The study also highlights informal, private reading rooms often frequented by migrant students preparing for competitive exams. These minimalist, privately-run spaces underscore pragmatic adaptation, challenging traditional definitions of library spaces.

Similarly, community libraries demonstrate innovative practices aimed at inclusivity and democratized access, reshaping notions of readership and library engagement.

Additionally, recent socio-political events, such as police interventions in library spaces during protests, reveal the symbolic significance of libraries as contested sites of intellectual freedom and community solidarity. This paper thus argues that libraries in Delhi are dynamic reflections of broader social, cultural, and political transformations, providing insights into how everyday reading practices actively shape and are shaped by urban life in contemporary Delhi.

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[Martina Domines](#)

University of Zagreb

[mdomines@m.ffzg.hr](mailto:mdomines@m.ffzg.hr)

**Reading the trauma of eating disorders: Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (2006) and Elena and Claire Dunkle's *Elena Vanishing* (2015)**

More than 50 years have passed since the publication of Georges Poulet' seminal essay "Criticism and the Experience of Interiority" (1972) suggesting that the act of reading involves the coming together of two consciousnesses – the writer's and the

reader's when the reader can hardly explain “the facility with which I not only understand but even feel what I read.” (60) In the meantime, structuralists and poststructuralists convinced us that the role of the reader is insignificant, with nothing to look for “outside the text”, to paraphrase Derrida. In the last decade, with the rise of affect theory, the role of the reader has been re-established and Poulet’s ideas reused. Thus Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth claim that “affect accumulates across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness” (2) where the affected reader acquires in turn the capacity to affect. The affect plays a vital role in reading trauma narratives and the reader can take various positions. Some of the possible readings of trauma narratives include: **the symptomatic reading** which embodies a reading effect that will in its turn emerge as symptom (Rooney, 2017: 127); **the empathetic reading** as a response founded in empathy which involves “intellectual interest, active imagination, emotional investment” and – crucially – “ethical engagement” (Assmann 2018: 216) or **the implicated reading** where the reader is a participant in a system that generates dispersed and unequal experiences of trauma and well-being simultaneously (Rothberg 2019: 12)

Therefore, this paper will look into two memoirs dealing with victims of anorexia nervosa: Marya Hornbacher’s *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (2006) and Elena and Claire Dunkle's *Elena Vanishing* (2015) in order to look into the possibilities of reading narratives on mental health issues. The main question it will ask has to do with how we read narratives on eating disorders and how many possibilities of reading exist in such a case. In line with Rita Felski's insistence to redefine what we mean by reading with a “critical thinking” it will promote an array of possibilities of reading mental illness narratives where “critical caveats are interspersed with flashes of affinity or sympathy; (and) bursts of romantic hope coexist with the deciphering of ideological subtexts” (2015: 4). In line with the ethical turn in the humanities the paper will take into account the subjective and the historical to account for different types of readers or different possibilities of reading narratives on eating disorders.

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[Antonia Došen / Mihaela Cik / Martina Jurišić](#)

Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb

[antonia.dosen@muo.hr](mailto:antonia.dosen@muo.hr) / [mihaela.cik@muo.hr](mailto:mihaela.cik@muo.hr) / [martina.jurisc@muo.hr](mailto:martina.jurisc@muo.hr)

### **Reading Habits of Jewish Families in Zagreb Between the Two World Wars**

During the renovation of the Museum of Arts and Crafts building, important sources that provide insight into the reading habits of Jewish families living in Zagreb between the two world wars were revealed. Books, as collateral victims of war, were stored away, and today they bear witness to the social history of a past era. The owners of the family libraries included in this research were important figures in Zagreb’s interwar scene. Their social status was reflected in their inclination towards collecting works of art, which had also led to the creation of their private libraries.

Due to expropriation during World War II, the owners were deprived of their property, and their books were forgotten and presumed lost. Without delving into the legal aspects of preserving Jewish family libraries to this day, one of the main objectives of this research is to reconstruct their origins. One of the key questions this research seeks to answer is how the books entered private libraries, i. e. were they inherited, were the acquisitions made intentionally, or did the items enter the collection by chance.



With a focus on sources, motivations, and methods of acquiring domestic and foreign literature, the discovered libraries will be studied to understand how Jewish families in Zagreb maintained their status as part of the intellectual elite between the two world wars. Their preference for certain types of publications reflects their literary interests, which, in turn, mirror their personal and professional lives. Therefore, to fully comprehend this body of literature, it is necessary to analyze various types of publications, ranging from children's literature and fiction to scientific and specialized literature in multiple languages.

In addition to thematic and content analysis, it is essential to examine material aspects of the book collections. A quantitative analysis will determine the number of serial and monographic publications, and their linguistic diversity. The bibliophilic aspect is also significant as it includes lists of family members, inscriptions and markings often found in the books that can testify about the reading habits of their owners. Finally, a detailed bibliography of this valuable rediscovered book collection will be compiled, being the first to shed light on the reading habits of Jewish families between the two world wars in Zagreb, and the historical-cultural influences that shaped them.

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Patrick Errington

Researchers: Dan Mirman, Sarah McGeown, Nicola Burns, Melissa Thye, Eli Chaput, Simon Boyle

University of Edinburgh

[p.errington@ed.ac.uk](mailto:p.errington@ed.ac.uk)

### **No Such Thing as Neutral: How Anticipated Reading Tasks Shape the ‘Everyday’ Reading of Poetry**

Affect philosopher and psychologist Giovanna Colombetti has argued (2014) that all organisms are inherently affective, necessarily exhibiting a ‘*lack of indifference*’, a ‘*sensibility or interest* for one’s own existence’, vis-à-vis their surroundings. This ‘*primordial affectivity*’ is deeper than (but provides the grounding for) moods, emotions, and all other forms of ‘higher order’ thinking. As such, we are and can never be affectively ‘neutral’ faced with a work of literature, whether in everyday reading or when attempting a stance of procedural objectivity in service of literary critique, as described in detail by Rita Felski (2015); indeed, because works of literature are not just the printed words on the page but emerge from a complex collaboration with readers, the impact of this affective stance as determined by our reading goals is likely to be yet more significant than for other kinds of object. But what exactly are these impacts and how might we characterise (and, if we so wish, change) the multiplicity of affective orientations toward works of literature?

Whilst the effect of reading ‘goals’ on the experience of literature has been often theorised, such effect has never been demonstrated empirically. Across multiple experiments, my colleagues and I have undertaken a multidisciplinary examination of how such ‘goals’ – in the form of anticipated post-reading activities (our ‘*sensibility or interest*’, what in psychology is called ‘task set’) – shape the aesthetic experience of poetry, one of the most ‘academicised’ literary forms, and the embodied cognitive mechanisms behind that experience. This presentation will outline these experiments, addressing first their basis in reader

response and formalist literary theories of ‘defamiliarisation’ as a means of enhancing aesthetic experience of poetic texts, and our phenomenological findings in support of this theory (and to some degree qualifying it) with regard to variously ‘defamiliarised’ metaphor phrases. I will then describe recent behavioural and neuroimaging experiments which suggest both significant neural differences between ‘analytic’ reading goals and more ‘creative’ goals, as well as the marked effects of task *enjoyment* on the aesthetic experience of poems. I will conclude by gesturing toward future research into how making accessible a greater variety of reading tasks can not only enhance peoples’ everyday reading enjoyment – and young peoples’ especially – but also the potential positive effects of poetry reading on psychosocial wellbeing.

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[Elsje Fourie](#)

University of Maastricht, Netherlands

[e.fourie@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:e.fourie@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

### **Global Novels, Global Readers? Imagining transnational communities along the circuits of global literary consumption**

Looked at in one way, the global market for literature has never been healthier or more diverse: the past decade has seen the establishment of new international literary prizes, the growth of reading publics in emerging economies, the success of authors from backgrounds beyond the Anglo-American publishing heartland and powerful new distribution platforms. From another angle, however, these trends represent the further commodification of literature—and particularly of its most lucrative and mobile genre, the novel. Not all novels ‘go global’, and those that do garner immense literary and public attention.

Literary scholars are divided on the consequences of such ‘global novels’ (GN): critics charge the literary marketplace with producing and circulating bland, homogenous texts that are devoid of local colour and foster the illusion of shallow, apolitical

global consensus among their readers [1]. Where globally successful novels do attempt to depict diversity, a related critique holds, the uneven power structures embedded in global capitalism invariably corrupt and pervert literature's ability to depict communities around the world in all their pluralism, leading instead to exoticisation and Othering [2]. Does the GN, 'by making foreignness into a literary commodity, prevent the possibility of any true encounter with difference' [3]? Or, as its defenders suggest, does the expanding geographical reach of the novel allow for new possibilities of depicting and imagining the multiscalar and hybrid ways that life is lived today [4]?

This paper contributes to these debates by empirically examining how the contradictory impulses embedded in the GN play out among the reading publics that consume them. *It asks how reading 'global novels' shapes differently situated readers' understanding of their relationship to the communities depicted in these novels.* Groups of readers in four countries will read the same four novels—Yael Van der Wouden's *De Bewaring (The Safekeep)*, Noviolet Bulawayo's *Glory*, Douglas Stuart's *Shuggie Bain* and Sayaka Murata's *4) コンビニ人間 (Convenience Store Woman)*—then engage in structured conversations about how they respond to those novels.

My theoretical framework draws on concepts from both sociology and literary studies. Anderson's sociological notion of the 'imagined community' has played a seminal role in showing how the printing press and 'print capitalism' created a reading public that would go on to 'imagine' a national identity beyond more geographically bounded pre-industrial communities [5]. Recently, scholars have begun to wonder whether novels can also help to create new, larger and more heterogeneous social groupings: 'the novel no longer accounts for the nation', write Rotger and Neus [6], 'but rather for the world as an 'imagined community' [7]. To more concretely operationalise how such processes manifest among actual readers, I draw on Felski's influential four uses of literature: *recognition, enchantment, knowledge and shock* [8]. GNs expand imaginaries to the extent that they allow readers to identify with the characters and stories depicted; imbue them with a sense of wonder and captivation towards unfamiliar places and people; expose them to unfamiliar perspectives and deepen their understanding; and challenge them with new and potentially disturbing worldviews and ideas.

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Colette Gordon

University of the Witwatersrand

[Colette.Gordon@wits.ac.za](mailto:Colette.Gordon@wits.ac.za)

### **Enter Reading: Social Reading and the Early Modern Playtext**

It is generally assumed that a single reader in possession of an early modern playtext must be in want of a guide. For every play that survives to be read, there is the textual supplement that addresses a non-specialist reader, simultaneously testifying to the absence of an ordinary readership. 16th and 17th drama has become better understood as literature conceived as “a loosely configured network of texts and practices” (Moi 2018), though the field has not been greatly moved by the claims of postcriticism nor by anxieties that attending to ordinary reading will put literary critics out of a job. The new theatre history and new book history have produced a complex picture of the playtext as produced for, and enjoyed by, theatre literate reading audiences. Primary educators however still hold to a naive opposition between ‘stage and page’, shifting from an earlier emphasis on working through the text (with notes and glosses) to banal consensus that students should read early modern playtexts after watching a performance - a performance that is an interpretation. This continues in universities, where students

typically read an early modern playtext only after learning what it contains - if they read it at all. If it is true that literary critics all share the same basic methodology: they read [the text] (Moi 2018), the same cannot be said of students. Though students may be particularly motivated 'to close down semiosis by imputing some final or definitive meaning' (Felski 2014) in the classroom the problem isn't a hermeneutics of suspicion, so much as a pedagogy that takes reading for granted. The focus on producing an 'interpretation' (the essay) sidelines ordinary reading, the value and the complexity of which is overlooked - although it should be of profound interest to scholars.

As I have argued elsewhere (Gordon 2023), spatial metaphors of reading (deep and surface), given plausibility and urgency by current digital anxieties are unhelpful, and the attendant binaries of deep versus shallow, slow versus fast, and active versus passive, taken separately, and especially taken together, proffer a weak, confused account of literary reading - in its ordinary sense - continuous linear reading of a literary text. A pedagogy that allows the bypassing of reading, more particularly of the experience of readerly uncertainty, has given us 'close reading' without ordinary reading, chatbots that write student papers, and students that write and think like chatbots. But it is particularly enervating for the study of early drama. Lauren Robertson's (2023) examination of 'Entertaining Uncertainty in Early Modern Theatre' is the first to highlight how uncertainty is essential to dramatic mechanics and dramatic meaning (bound up with audience pleasure). Where pedagogy, assessment, and critical approaches foster 'hyper active' or, distinguishing it from N Katherine Hayles' use, extr(a)ctive reading (where they foster reading at all), I propose an expectant pedagogy supported by exploratory dialogic social reading (through web annotation), designed to center reading and to engage affective mapping - to "open ourselves to the experience offered by the text" (Moi) not completely, or as an end in itself, but to understand how the play works (conceiving that it may not work) for an audience modeled by a community of (actual) readers.

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Seyma Gumus

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales



## **Reading as an Everyday Practice in Nigar Hanım’s Diaries and the Question of Female Readership in the late 19th Century Ottoman Literature**

Nigar Hanım’s diaries, spanning from 1887 until her death in 1918, offer a unique lens into the cultural life of Istanbul’s elites in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While these texts give clues about her journey as a poet, they also provide invaluable insights into her everyday life, particularly as a reader. Existing scholarship on 19th-century women in Ottoman literature frequently interrogates the ways in which female readers were represented in fiction, often portraying them as impressionable consumers whose reading habits were subject to scrutiny and control. However, this period also witnessed the emergence of a generation of female writers striving to establish themselves in a male-dominated literary sphere that sought to fix women in the role of the reader rather than the author. Within this broader discourse, both male and female-authored texts positioned women’s reading as a site of contention, shaping contemporary debates about intellectual authority, gender roles, and literary production/consumption. This study challenges the prevailing dichotomy of reader and writer by examining how Nigar Hanım constructs her identity as a reader within the intimate space of her diaries. By analyzing the instances in which Nigar Hanım writes about her reading practices and the texts she engages with, this study questions the extent to which the rigid categories of (female) reader and (female) writer hold within personal narratives. It argues that, in the private realm of her diaries, Nigar Hanım presents a fluid and nuanced vision of female readership—one that resists the constraints imposed by contemporary literary discourse and instead frames reading as an everyday practice imbued with emotional and intellectual significance. In doing so, this study contributes to a broader understanding of women’s literary engagement in the late Ottoman period, moving beyond representations in fiction to explore the lived realities of reading as a practice of both cultural participation and self-fashioning.

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Janet Handley

The Arctic University of Norway

[janet.handley@uit.no](mailto:janet.handley@uit.no)

### **Engaging with political violence in fiction: readers, readings, and responses**

My PhD project: “*Sharpening the Moral Imagination*”: *Political Violence and the Ethics of Reading* applies qualitative interviews with readers via book club networks in its analyses of three contemporary novels. These novels (Han Kang’s *Human Acts* from 2016, Omar Robert Hamilton’s *The City Always Wins* from 2017, and Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* from 2017) are fictional reworkings of real-life events. In various ways they depict how political violence impacts on everyday lives. The study consists of two levels of analysis, where interviews with everyday readers combine with close readings informed by current theories of ethical reading and hermeneutics.

The qualitative interviews generate primary research data on readers’ perspectives. This enables a dialogue between everyday reading experiences and my own close readings. Thus, literary responses are documented, which connect the everyday and academic reading experiences, and offer new insights into how literature contributes to our understanding of the world and ourselves in general, and trauma and violence in particular.

The conversation between responses from non-academic readers and my own analyses enables me to explore what Hanna Meretoja (2017) calls “the transformative potential of literature”, and what Ann Rigney in her work on cultural memory defines

as “aesthetic agency”. Furthermore, it aligns with Rita Felski’s notion of “an aesthetic that is premised on relation rather than separation, on attachment rather than autonomy” (2020: viii). The qualitative dimension of the study confirms and expands on the notion that “Engaging with the dark moments of history can develop our narrative imagination in ethically valuable ways that might teach us something about ourselves that we might not otherwise be able to see” (Meretoja 2017: 302). Similarly, interviews with readers demonstrate how literature offers an “‘experiential’ mode of access to historical events” (Rigney 2019: 368), and that “[s]tudying what happens in the intimacy of reading and viewing is as crucial to analysis as larger-scale social and cultural developments” (Rigney 2021: 12). Notably, these are aspects of the dynamics of literature and its effects easily ignored in traditional approaches that rely on the perspective of a singular academic reading authority.

The proposed presentation provides examples from the interview data, explores the advantages of working with everyday readers, and challenges the dichotomy between intellect and affect, professional and non-academic readers. What defines the interaction of reader, text, and author and what does it imply? What strategies and devices serve to engage the reader? Can literature indeed “sharpen” the moral imagination?

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Lukas Kosch

Universität Wien

[lukas.kosch@univie.ac.at](mailto:lukas.kosch@univie.ac.at)

### **The Transformation of Everyday Reading: Consequences of Modality and Materiality for Literary Reading Practices**

With the rising popularity of digital reading media, leisure reading is undergoing a transformation process (Schwabe et al., 2022). In the contemporary reading landscape, individuals must increasingly make deliberate choices between print, digital, and audio formats, reflecting a significant shift in literary engagement (Baron, 2021). The widespread availability of literary works across multiple formats necessitates greater precision in analyzing the mediality of reading, while also challenging the traditional primacy of the printed book (Have & Pedersen, 2016). Everyday reading encompasses diverse modalities and occurs across various locations, temporal contexts, and with distinct objectives. This talk examines the material, sensory, and cognitive dimensions of literary reception, synthesizing insights from two focus group studies (n=34 each) on audiobook consumption and e-book versus print reading.

Drawing on a praxeological approach, these two studies explore how readers and listeners navigate different reception modalities, emphasizing their motivations, situational preferences, and the perceived distinctions between auditory and visual literary experiences. Therefore, we do not conceptualize printed books, e-books or audiobooks as interpreted objects in the conventional sense, but rather, following Reckwitz's (2002) demand for praxeology, as objects to be handled and constitutive elements of forms of behavior. Drawing on a media-oriented practice approach, we explore, quite simply, what people are doing in relation to media across different situations and contexts (Couldry, 2010). Thus, the focus is less on different affordances

and object properties of the reading device and more on the behavioral patterns that are triggered due to the choice of a certain reading medium. While audiobooks and e-books have become integral to contemporary reading practices, they do not simply replace printed books but rather serve as complementary formats employed for specific purposes. Our findings reveal significant differences in reading practices based on medium, reading situation, genre selection, reading purpose, and literary quality, with notable implications for memory, intellectual ownership, and emotional engagement (Kosch et al., 2022).

Furthermore, this research underscores the multimodal nature of everyday reading, where literary consumption is frequently embedded in other activities such as commuting, exercising, multitasking or daily routines. By analyzing the interplay between *text, medium, readers/listeners, situations and practices, and the resulting effects* (Kosch et al., 2024), this study challenges traditional conceptions of reading and expands our understanding of literary- aesthetic experience in an increasingly digitalized world.

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Moniek M. Kuijpers / Pema Frick

University of Basel

[moniek.kuijpers@unibas.ch](mailto:moniek.kuijpers@unibas.ch)

### **Online Shared Reading Practices of Young Adults: A Q-Methodology Interview Study**

In recent years, there has been a rise in research on the *dialogic nature* of reading in the context of face-to-face book clubs, shared reading groups and shared reading interventions (e.g., Allington & Swann, 2009; Peplow, Swann, Trimarco, & Whiteley, 2015). The benefits of participation in such groups include improved powers of concentration, valued regular social contact, valued opportunity to reflect on life experiences via memories or emotions evoked by literature, and a positive change in personal reading habits (e.g., Billington & Steenberg, 2021). As of yet, it is unclear whether these effects can also be found when people participate in shared reading practices that take place in online environments naturally.

With online environments we are referring to social media specifically developed for interactions around the activity of reading (such as book recommendation websites like Goodreads) or social media adapted by members themselves to interact about reading (such as BookTok on TikTok or BookTube on Youtube). As young adults are increasingly more involved in online reading practices, but these practices are woefully under-investigated, it is important that we obtain an understanding of how these platforms are used, and through what mechanisms these types of shared reading activities affect readers' sense of well-being and their reading habits.

In this contribution, we will present the results of a Q-methodology interview study with German-speaking Swiss young adults (between 18 and 25 years of age), who are self-proclaimed avid users of online platforms to discuss their reading or partake in other activities surrounding the act of reading. We hope to arrive at a better sense of what the most popular platforms are and what kind of practices young adults engage in on these platforms. Additionally, we are interested in whether the practices they engage in benefit their reading habits and sense of well-being. This last question will be asked indirectly through a so-called Q-sort, whereby participants are asked to sort authentic statements about a particular aspect of subjectivity (in our case what it is like to participate in online shared reading practices) in a bell-shaped grid ranging from -3 (not at all like my everyday experience) to +3 (very much like my everyday experience). The statements will be derived from a qualitative dataset containing

a focus group interview as well as open questionnaire responses from a face-to-face Shared Reading intervention study. This choice was made so as to enable a comparison of face-to-face with online shared reading practices, and their mechanisms and effects on young adult readers.

The Q-sort will allow us to pinpoint groups of participants who share similar perspectives on online shared reading practices. Furthermore, we hope to demonstrate the usefulness of Q-methodology as an approach to the study of young adults' reading behavior, as we agree with Kuzmicova and colleagues that it is "an inclusive, respectful and ethical methodology that challenges a one-size-fits-all approach and that decreases the risk of adult perspectives overshadowing those of young adults in social research (Kuzmicova et al., 2022).

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Jane Qian Liu

The University of Warwick

[Qian.Liu.1@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Qian.Liu.1@warwick.ac.uk)

## Reading *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in Early Twentieth-century China

When *The Sorrows of Young Werther* was published in Europe, it instantly created an enormous social impact, where many enchanted readers imitated the outfit, the temperament, and even the suicidal decision of Werther. This phenomenon, known variously as the “Werther Fervor”, the “Cult of Werther”, or the “Werther Effect”, has long been discussed in the Western academia. The term “Werther effect” has been used to refer to “imitation suicides elicited by media portrayals of suicide”, and it has since been widely researched in the fields of public health, media studies, and cultural studies. In this research, I discuss the Chinese counterpart of the Werther fervor in the early twentieth-century by probing the way readers merged their reading of this novel with their own circumstances. I then zoom in on how the impact of Guo Moruo’s translation may have been associated with the suicides of young students, a striking social phenomenon observed by many Republican critics.

While Goethe was already introduced to Chinese readers as early as 1898, he only became much more widely known after the first full translation of *Werther*, translated by Guo Moruo, was published in April 1922 by Taidong Book Company in Shanghai. Between 1922 and 1932, Guo’s translation was reprinted over 50 times, testifying to the extent of its popularity. In fact, Guo’s translation of *Werther* not only left an indelible mark on the modern Chinese language, but also wielded an enormous influence on the susceptible minds of young Chinese writers and common readers alike. The most notable worshippers of *Werther* include Guo Moruo himself, Tian Han, and Zong Baihua, who together composed the anthology *Kleeblatt* (三叶集 Shamrock) to focus solely on Goethe, as well as a less known yet equally, if not more, passionate follower, the playwright Cao Xuesong. I examine the reading of *Werther* by these writers as well as by common readers, before probing the close relation between the reading of this work of popular literature and the social issue of suicides in China at the time.

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Joanna Maj

TU Dresden / University of Wrocław

[joanna\\_maria.maj@tu-dresden.de](mailto:joanna_maria.maj@tu-dresden.de)

### **Reading as a Tourist Performance**

The interest in the ‘footsteps of literature’ is not new to either tourist-readers or literary scholars. People have been wandering with a book in hand since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, the massiveness of tourism and literature today has opened up space for thematic, literary tourism. Readers now seek to prolong their reading experience. They want to turn the experience of imagination, the textual experience, into a material one. They search for literary literary corners and routes: places where writers resided, lived, and created, as well as actual locations described in works.

Thus, literary tourism (Croy, 2012) is undergoing fundamental changes, involving, among other things, new reading practices, communication methods, and activities undertaken by readers. Literary tourists read in places associated with literature, but pay attention only to selected passages. They read (or listen to) literary fragments while walking, taking a break during a city tour or strolling along a nature trail. They focus on descriptions of literary places that have a real, non-fictional reference.

The phenomenon of literary tourism, by tracing geographical places in their literary entanglements, explains to the reader how the chosen space and literature are in a reciprocal relationship, how the place influences literary works, and how its reception is, in turn, mediated by the texts. „Literature shapes habitus (understood as dispositions and acquired patterns of perception, thinking, valuing and acting and transferring into social capital), creating foundation myths or performing community-forming functions in specific places or regions (Rybicka 2014, 108).

In this paper, I aim to present the results of an analysis of selected tools—such as literary guide texts, maps, and digital applications—that enable tourists to read fragments of literary works at literary-tourist places. I will explore what constitutes the entry into the described topographical-literary order, which takes place not only through reading but also through material experience, sensory engagement, and physical movement. By examining literary tourism tools (including various types of guidebooks, digital literary maps, and applications), I will show how tourist reading is designed, how it facilitates a deeper understanding of a literary text, and how it allows one to experience the place described within the text. Additionally, I aim to investigate whether literary-tourist practice is primarily about reading and understanding a text more deeply through the landscape and context, or whether it involves the mimetic, utilitarian use of literature for sightseeing. I will ask how the practice of reading in the tourist space involves affect. What kind of experience does it generate, and how does it transform reading into a bodily performance?

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Anna Murashova

University of Tartu

[anna.murashova@ut.ee](mailto:anna.murashova@ut.ee)

### **Online platforms and everyday reading: the Russian case**

Electronic book publishing and the Internet changed the reading landscape, but most literary practices on the Internet, such as fanfiction and self-publishing platforms, are still outside mainstream literary studies. Reading strategies on the Internet differ from reading strategies in the Gutenberg era; they are country-specific, platform-specific, device-specific.

This is a case study of Russian online self-publishing platforms such as litnet.com, author.today, and litmarket.ru, where users can write, read and discuss the published texts. Most of the texts published there belong to popular fictional genres such as romance novel, accidental travel, and military fantasy. Thousands of authors publish tens of thousands of texts on these platforms, and to attract readers, authors should engage them in their texts from the very beginning of the narrative process and maintain their interest until the end. Readers actively participate in the writing and reading process. Authors publish their texts partially, chapter by chapter while writing, and readers comment and discuss each piece of the story. After such an active reading on the platform, some readers start to write their own stories; thus, reading becomes “wreading.”

The term “wreading” originates from George Landow’s idea of “wreader,” meaning that reading and writing activities, both commenting and writing new fictional texts, intertwine each other. The idea of social reading is closely connected to social

media technologies and online communities as points of intensive interaction, exchange and sharing of reading experience, recommendations, comments, and reviews.

The aim of my presentation is to analyze reading practices on the self-publishing platform. Based on the ongoing digital ethnography research and the semi-structured interviews, I will investigate who and for what purposes read on questioned online platforms, how readers choose what book to read, how reading practice depends on the medium and device readers read, how their reading habits are incorporated into the everyday activity, and how common discursive space impacts on the readers' engagement in the story.

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Malcolm Noble

Leicester Vaughan College

[malcolm.noble@vaughan.coop](mailto:malcolm.noble@vaughan.coop)

### **Using affective bibliographical methods to recover everyday queer reading of *Heartstopper***

Queer bibliography seeks ways to study material texts which seek to recover the experiences of queer readers. Itself a young and emerging field, it draws on much longer queer vernacular traditions: the reading practices adopted by intuitively by readers in bookshops, libraries, and in their own reading lives to find books of interest to those with nonnormative sexualities, by interpreting subtle codes and signs (Noble and Pyke 2024). Yet in recent years such abilities might appear to be less relevant: the parsing of covers, blurbs, and other epitexts has given way to much more confident expressions of queer contents as books are covered in rainbows and other queer semiotics (Wolowic et al. 2017).

Alice Oseman's *Heartstopper* stands in sharp contrast to representation only available after cracking obtuse codes. Starting as a web-comic in 2016, before self-publication after successful crowdfunding in 2018, in 2019 Hachette printed and distributed them as a remarkable commercial success. Translations followed into several dozen languages, with this ongoing project including Croatian in 2024. A Netflix adaptation begun in 2022 under the care of the author has put this queer young adult story seemingly everywhere. This presents a complex transmedia reading landscape to unpack (Mygind 2023). Bookshops and libraries seem unable to get these rainbow, pastel-hued volumes quickly enough. Special editions proliferate with sprayed edges, printed endpapers, doodles and holograph signatures by the author. Much of this is characteristic of the “made-collectible” tradition (Romney 2023).

We know that representation is vital for young, marginalized readers (Felski 2008; Bishop, n.d.) too that childhood reading is important for younger queer readers (Pyke 2023; Sedgwick 1997), and older ones too (Price 2023). The linking of printed materiality to modes of reading (Rubery and Price 2020). *Heartstopper* appears both to matter and enjoy such success because of the breadth and specificity of the identifies it represents (Allen 2023). Instantly recognizable by dint of generous physical format and the pastel rainbow the spines lined up create, these do heavy lifting in showing reading identities and identities which have been read on shelfies. These stand in sharp contrast to so-called “red flag” bookshelves (King 2022). If reading is predicated on affect and repair (Love 2023), then so too must our relationship with books physically be understood affectively, for which queer methods are well-equipped (Noble 2024).

In this paper I make the case for queer bibliographic methods as essential to understanding *Heartstopper* in affective terms, across generations, formats. Firstly, I discuss the materiality of *Heartstopper* editions as providing evidence of reading in affective terms, and secondly, consider these as messy objects in complex shelfie assemblages of reading histories. In so doing, I aim to shed light on this queer reading as well as demonstrate the applicability of queer bibliographical approaches for those studying everyday reading.

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Julija Ovsec

Czech Academy of Science

### **What do we feel when we read: Interpretation of Results of the Readers Survey**

Literature is not just symbolic but lived and enacted through embodied experience. Wendy Griswold argues that cultural meanings arise from the interaction between audiences and cultural objects, significantly shaped by their social context. In her paper "The Fabrication of Meaning" (1987), she suggests that cultural objects, like novels, and the individuals who engage with them create a collaborative framework for developing meaning rather than merely accepting it. Rita Felski, in "The Limits of Critique" (2015), emphasizes the importance of readers' emotional responses in interpreting meaning. She advocates for literary criticism to extend beyond uncovering hidden truths to fostering a constructive dialogue with the text, thereby allowing readers' feelings to shape their understanding.

To analyze how the body is involved in the reading experience, I created a survey with simple questions on physical and emotional responses during reading. I was interested in what specific physical responses readers reported experiencing while reading, how they would describe literary works based on their emotional responses, and if and how they expressed their reactions to reading. Two hundred leisure readers from Slovenia answered the survey questions. In this paper, I will present an analysis of the survey and support it with a theoretical framework to prove that reading is not just a mental activity but also stretches to the physical world.

In "The Experientiality of Narrative" (2014), Marco Caracciolo asserts that literature is more than an abstract system of signs; it represents an experiential practice influenced by readers' sensorimotor and cognitive interactions. The idea that narratives are experienced rather than just processed supports the notion that readers simulate perceptual and physical experiences instead of merely envisioning story worlds (Caracciolo, 100). Joshua Landy proposes that fiction's value is not in imparting explicit moral lessons or factual knowledge but in enhancing and developing our cognitive skills. In "How to Do Things with Fictions" (2012), he describes certain literary works as "formative fictions," which provide readers with mental exercise rather than straightforward guidance. These works cultivate essential abilities such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and self-reflection. For Landy, the significance of fiction transcends its narrative content; it also affects the reader through its structural elements, teaching individuals how to navigate complex ideas, embrace uncertainty, and expand their intellectual capacities, much like how physical exercise strengthens the body.

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Ave Palm

University of Tartu

[ave.palm@ut.ee](mailto:ave.palm@ut.ee)

### **“good book it made me want to die”: The Affected and Affective Readings of a Controversial Early-20th-Century Queer Tragedy**

Radclyffe Hall’s novel *The Well of Loneliness* was first published in 1928 and subsequently banned under the UK Obscene Publications Act for its earnest plea for the acceptance of people with non-normative sexuality and gender. The book became a rallying point in the fight against the increasing censorship of the British government. At the same time, the novel was criticised for its “middlebrow” oversentimental Victorian narrative style. Written at the height of the friction between modernity and conservatism, the overall heightened emotional quality of the story combined with the theatrically tragic ending has both invited derision for its melodrama from literary professionals and admiration for its emotional impact from many lay readers. The intense affectivity has been at the centre of many conflicted readings.

The questions of professional vs. lay reader, or “good” and “bad” reading, have been extensively debated in English language literary theory in the last decades (e.g. Emre 2017; Felski 2008, 2020; Guillory 2022). The infamous *Well of Loneliness* is, in many

ways, still an excellent point of reference through which we can examine the divergent reactions that a contentious text can create both in the past and present, particularly with references to the different expectations in literary criticism and everyday lay reading. According to various readers on Goodreads, Hall's novel has not lost its relevance even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As one user writes: "What makes this book so good is not necessarily the story, though the story is well written and engaging, but the emotions it provokes. This is what I think allows it to age so well." Book-reviewing websites like Goodreads offer unprecedented access to an immediate, intimate and self-reflective account of lay reading and, thus, an opportunity for researchers to encounter emerging forms of discourse (Driscoll & Rehberg Sedo 2019: 248).

This presentation will explore the present-day readers' reception of *The Well of Loneliness* on Goodreads and highlight how they express strong affective reactions in their written reflections triggered by identification, enchantment, shock, sympathy or antipathy. What happens when readers leave themselves exposed to the full impact of a literary text instead of striving for analytical detachment? The colourful, impressionistic and often performative language used to describe seemingly indescribable embodied emotions demonstrates a distinctly non-professional approach to reading and presents fascinating discussion points about how people engage with literature.

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Victoria Pöhls / Aleksandra Milenovic

University College Dublin

[victoria.pohls@ucd.ie](mailto:victoria.pohls@ucd.ie)

## **“I don't know why that most horrible part comes up to me now” - Readers (Dis)Engagement with Texts representing Child Sexual Abuse**

Reading can be a way of engaging with so-called ‘difficult topics’ usually avoided (Menninghaus et al. 2017). One such issue is child sexual abuse (CSA): Despite being a critical issue affecting one-in-eight children worldwide (Sanjeevi et al. 2018; European Commission 2024) with potentially grave mental and physical health consequences (Hailes et al. 2019), it remains a relatively taboo subject. Notwithstanding the social avoidance, CSA is widely represented in literary fiction and autobiographies, which may also affect victim-survivors’ and wider public understandings of the issue. Can engaging with (fictional) representations in the ‘safe space’ of books at least partly counteract the societal flinch and correct harmful preconceptions about CSA?

To date, research into how fiction representing CSA affects audiences who spontaneously come across CSA as part of their everyday reading is very limited. Therefore, we collaborated with the PoKUS team to investigate mentions of texts representing CSA in their corpus of 1005 Croatian readers discussing self-chosen books.

An initial corpus review resulted in the identification of 29 books mentioning or alluding to CSA. These range from works where CSA is a central theme (e.g., Nabokov's “Lolita”), to those where it is integral to the character's backstory or a driving force in the plot (e.g., Larsson’s “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” or Hosseini’s “The Kite Runner”), or where CSA is merely a peripheral element (e.g., Martin’s “Game of Thrones”).

First, we tried to ascertain whether respondents, unprompted by the interviewers, would mention CSA at all when discussing their reading experiences (RQ1), expecting that this would vary according to the topic's prominence within the book.

Second, we explored what aspects of CSA were mentioned (RQ2): Did readers focus on the fact of representation itself, on graphic scenes, on their own (emotional) reaction to the depiction, or did they offer thoughts that went beyond the reading, relating the story to life experiences or societal consequences? A qualitative thematic analysis revealed that strong and mixed emotional responses occurred only in some participants, but they were remembered even after a significant amount of time had passed since the initial reading. Notably, respondents volunteered very different kinds of ‘lessons learnt’.

Thirdly, we focused on the way CSA was discussed by respondents (RQ3) and analyzed the terms used to describe CSA as well as subvocal expressions and pauses potentially hinting at discomfort in talking about this theme.

Lastly, we considered whether participants adopted a victim-survivor-centred perspective when discussing the books, or whether they instead endorsed variations of harmful CSA myths (Glina et al. 2022), e.g. victim blaming (RQ4). We will relate our findings to the representation in the specific book to provide an indication of whether authorial ways of representing CSA can be connected to readers' perception of it and whether there is any evidence of the texts helping overcome the flinch. These analyses, grounded in the ecologically-valid PoKUS corpus, will help us to gain a deeper comprehension of the impact of (specific) representations on actual readers, informing future research in this area.

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Elena Prat

Le Mans University

[elena.prat@univ-lemans.fr](mailto:elena.prat@univ-lemans.fr)

### **Identifying reading emotions: quali-quantitative study of a corpus of testimonies from French contemporary readers**

This presentation outlines the findings of my PhD thesis in comparative literature and digital humanities, supervised by Brigitte Ouvry-Vial and defended in November 2024 at Le Mans University. The thesis sought to define “reading emotions” empirically, thus addressing a major theoretical and methodological challenge: indeed, reading, as an inner experience, eludes direct observation (Darnton 1986). The emotions it triggers can therefore only be studied retrospectively, drawing on readers' impressions, memories, and interpretations. In order to account for the specific nature of these “reconstructed” emotions, I have designed a tailored analytical framework at the crossroads of two largely autonomous fields: reading studies and emotion research.

This framework relies on two premises stemming from these research areas. Firstly, reading is a dynamic interaction between the text and its reader (Iser 1976, Jauss 1978), grounded in shared neural mechanisms (Dehaene 2007) but also shaped by historical (Cavallo and Chartier 1997), psychological (Picard 1986), social (Bourdieu 1979), and individual (Lahire 2004) factors. Secondly, emotions play a key role in human cognition and intervene in evaluative processes (Nussbaum 2001, Robinson 2005, Scherer 2005).

I applied my analytical framework to a corpus of 3000 reading testimonies from 2010 and 2011. These testimonies were written by ordinary readers seeking to participate as jurors in the Prix du Livre Inter, a French literary award granted annually by a non-professional jury. This jury is selected by journalists from France Inter, a highly regarded cultural radio station.

This extensive corpus was examined through a computer-assisted approach that combined quantitative and qualitative analysis. The analysis aimed to explore not so much the readers' spontaneous emotions as the way in which they are

intellectualized and articulated in writing. It yielded three main findings, which I will illustrate in my presentation with examples drawn from the letters.

First, readers acknowledge, in most cases, the crucial role of their emotional, sensory, and intellectual engagement in imparting real existence to the text, providing empirical evidence of the dynamic nature of the act of reading.

Second, reading is associated with a broad spectrum of emotions, which I sought to systematize into a thesaurus using preexisting emotion classes (Schindler 2017). Readers relate their emotions both to the situations depicted in the text and to its formal qualities, drawing on their literary knowledge, moral values, and personal memories to explain what moved them. This suggests that reading emotions arise from elements of the work that readers perceive as significant, those they deem personally meaningful.

Finally, my analysis highlights the dual nature of reading emotions as both « ordinary » and « aesthetic ». On the one hand, emotions tied to fictional characters, places, or situations prompt readers to reflect on themselves and their environment, sometimes with tangible effects on their personal, social, or professional lives. On the other hand, by reflecting on the emotions elicited by a text's style and form, readers assess and appreciate the aesthetic value of a literary work.

To conclude, my presentation will outline potential avenues for further research stemming from this project.

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[DeNel Rehberg Sedo / Danielle Fuller / Julie Rak](#)

Mount Saint Vincent University / University of Alberta / University of Alberta

[DeNel.RehbergSedo@msvu.ca](mailto:DeNel.RehbergSedo@msvu.ca) / [dfuller@ualberta.ca](mailto:dfuller@ualberta.ca) / [julie.rak@ualberta.ca](mailto:julie.rak@ualberta.ca)

### **Memoir Reading, Remembering, Reflecting on Social Media**

Why do readers turn to memoir to understand the world? How do readers present their memoir reading on social media? What role do social media platforms play in shaping readers' presentation of their memoir reading? These are the questions of an interdisciplinary, multi-language project called *Reading for Our Lives: Readers, Memoir and Social Media* in which we investigate non-professional reading responses to *I'm Glad my Mother Died* by Jennette McCurdy (2023), *Gender Queer: A*

*Memoir* by Maia Kobabe (2020), *I Want to Die but I also Want to Eat Tteokbokki: A Memoir* by Baek Sehee (2022), and *Making it So: A Memoir* by Patrick Stewart.

Social media platforms are spaces where readers discover books, talk about them, and recommend (or not) their choices (Foesberg 2012; Fuller and Rehberg Sedo 2019; Thomas 2020). There are studies of reading practices on a single platform, such as Goodreads (Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo 2018), Instagram (Zhan, Tu, and Yu 2018), TikTok (Low, Ehret, and Hagh 2023), Twitter (Gruzd and Rehberg Sedo 2012), Wattpad (Ramdarshan Bold 2016), or YouTube (Tomasena and Scolari 2024), or more wide-ranging studies that connect reading, media ecologies and the literary sphere together (Ren 2024). Most of the scholarship focuses on readers reading fiction. Our project makes the study of reading *memoir* its specific intention, which is an important advancement to the field of Reading Studies.

My paper is currently a work-in-progress. I will focus on multimodal readers'<sup>3</sup> articulations of individual memories of life experiences prompted by the memoirs. Multimodal reader cubed refers to readers in a post-digital age who combine on-and off-line practices of reading, and book selection. Multimodal readers<sup>3</sup> engage in modes of communication that are gestural, visual, audio, spatial and linguistic. They move across devices and formats, and act and interact within a mobile, networked, multimedia environment (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo 2023, 5-7).

Using scraping software and manual collection for two weeks in February and March 2023 and 2024, our dataset consists of randomized reader posts and conversations for each memoir using GoodReads for every case study (1063 original posts), plus two different social media platforms per book. The platforms are Reddit (236), Instagram (331), TikTok (201), X (370) and YouTube (5). The data were managed using NVivo and coded using both inductive and deductive means to create coding categories. Analysis includes both semi-distant and close reading of the text, video and sound.

Preliminary findings indicate that readers' memories include wide-ranging recollection of other book titles, and different kinds of media consumption. This points to reader agency in genre formation/maintenance and platform preferences. Importantly, many readers reflect on their identity formation and life experiences, revealing strong emotional responses to the memoirs. Opposing ideological views and responses appear more often in longer form on Goodreads and Reddit. Reviews and the discussion that ensues is more articulate and fulsome than those on the other platforms.

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Corinne Sandwith

University of Pretoria

[corinne.sandwith@up.ac.za](mailto:corinne.sandwith@up.ac.za)

### **Performative Citation and Everyday Reading: Towards a History of Black Reading Cultures in Colonial South Africa**

This chapter makes a case for the reconstruction of everyday Black reading practices in colonial contexts via a history of citation. Focusing on the Black counter public sphere – both public speeches and the popular periodical press – the paper uses the evidence of performative public citation to excavate a hidden history of everyday reading in early twentieth century South Africa. It is especially concerned with what a history of citational practices can reveal about what books were circulating in this period; how they became integrated into everyday thinking; how they were applied to – and functioned as a lens on – contemporary events; and what they meant in affective terms for ordinary Black readers. The paper approaches this history through the imaginary reconstruction – on the basis of multiple practices of citation – of the personal libraries of two key figures in South African politics during this period, namely Clements Kadalie, leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) and RV Selope Thema, editor of the popular newspaper, *Bantu World* and veteran of the African National Congress (ANC). It argues that a focus on citational practice provides a means to address the dearth of the white archive in relation to ordinary Black experience in South Africa and points to the fact that Black readers engaged in a strategic, and often contestatory, appropriation of canonical and popular texts as part of an anti-colonial or decolonial politics.

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Sara Tanderup Linkis / Julia Pennlert

Lund University / University of Borås

[sara.tanderup\\_linkis@kultur.lu.se](mailto:sara.tanderup_linkis@kultur.lu.se) / [julia.pennlert@hb.se](mailto:julia.pennlert@hb.se)

### **Everyday Listening: How Audiobooks Transform Uses and Experiences of Literature**

Audiobooks have become increasingly popular in recent years. As more and more people *listen* to books, the format paves the way for new modes of integrating uses of literature into everyday life. While reading by listening is nothing new (Rubery 2016), digital audiobooks make it possible to read anywhere and anytime via a smartphone and some headphones – while exercising, commuting or doing housework (Have & Stougaard Pedersen 2015, Linkis & Pennlert 2022). Audiobook reading is thus associated with multitasking and is often framed as a distracted form of reading – usually contrasted with print reading as associated with absorption and concentration.

In the proposed paper, we aim to nuance these ideas by analyzing and discussing audiobook reading and uses of literature based on the (lay)listeners' perspectives. Thus, we ask: *How do audiobook users motivate and describe uses of the audiobook format? How do everyday uses associated with the format shape experiences of literary works? And how do literary experiences through the audiobook format shape how we experience everyday life?*

The paper is based on 9 focus group interviews – so-called “audiobook circles” – with Swedish audiobook users, conducted in spring 2025. The interviews focus on general uses and experiences of audiobooks but also on group discussions of selected works in audio format (works written specifically for audio or audio adaptations of literary works). We analyze and discuss interview results through a theoretical framework based in literary studies (Felski 2008), the sociology of literature and digital book studies (e.g. Murray 2018), reading studies (Engberg et al. 2022; Koepnick 2019, 2013) and sound studies (e.g. Bull 2007). This interdisciplinary approach allows us to discuss how new modes of using literature in audio format relates to broader developments in contemporary listening culture and everyday life in digital culture. That is, we aim to understand how everyday uses of audiobooks (re)shape how we read and experience literature, but also how literature in audiobook format may (re)shape how we experience everyday life.

The paper is part of the research project “Between Sound and Text: Production, Content and Experiences of Multimodal Audio Literature” (PI: Sara Tanderup Linkis, Lund University), funded by The Swedish Research Council 2024-2027. The focus group study has been approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority.

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María Angélica Thumala Olave

University of Edinburgh

[Angelica.Thumala@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Angelica.Thumala@ed.ac.uk)

**Remediation and attachment in the reading of eBooks. Illustrations from the United Kingdom.**

In the context of the ongoing transformations in books' forms and uses, I consider what modes of attachment to e-Books are displayed by leisure readers in the UK. The data are interviews and archive material about the experiences of reading print and digital books among readers from a range of backgrounds. Theoretically, I develop a cultural sociology of reading which builds on theories of attachment and iconicity. E-Books are remediations of the codex. They retain features of the old medium while also claiming to improve upon it. I examine how the affordances of eBooks strengthen attachment to reading as a practice for some readers and produce rejection of their material form among others. These various stances take place under the influence of the iconic status of the codex in British society. This defines how readers conceive of and sensually apprehend and evaluate books generally. Zooming into the more numerous accounts of those who, while reading both types prefer the codex, I argue that this preference is not the nostalgic reaffirmation of print's aura but the outcome of the aesthetic encounter with print books.

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Carrie Timlin

University of the Witwatersrand

[carrie-leigh.timlin@wits.ac.za](mailto:carrie-leigh.timlin@wits.ac.za)

### **Virginia Woolf and the New Common Reader**

In 1925 and 1932 respectively, Virginia Woolf published two volumes of essays titled *The Common Reader*, designed to make a wide array of literatures comprehensible to the ordinary person and provide the tools that, in her estimation, readers need to access and fully appreciate it. These volumes were compiled when the growth industry of literary criticism was gaining in traction and influence with elite periodicals like *The New Statesman* defining highbrow against middle and lowbrow literature in what is commonly referred to as the ‘battle of the brows’. Woolf, a highbrow, was among those who were deeply critical of sought after, mass produced popular fiction, made widely accessible through new print technologies to a rapidly growing reading public born of 19<sup>th</sup> Century educational reforms. A century later, new technologies in social media, alongside a renewed interest in reading cultivated during the COVID-19 pandemic, has amounted to an ever-expanding reading public whose interest in popular fiction has been subjected to the same harsh criticism. The term ‘middlebrow’ – not coined by Woolf, but widely associated with how she defined it in an unsent letter to *The New Statesman* – has re-entered discourse describing readerships that closely resemble a significant sector of online ‘Bookish’ communities. Considering the striking parallels between then and now, Woolf’s definitions of what it means to be ‘a common reader’ and ‘middlebrow’ provide a useful starting point for interrogating critical responses to contemporary readers and reading practices. Drawing on an overview of current social media trends on BookTok (one of the largest subcommunities on TikTok), this paper explores what it means to be middlebrow and a common reader today, and how this aligns with and differs from Woolf’s definitions, showing the historical continuity of how reading communities are formed, how readerships are categorised and critiqued, and their influence on literary production and literary criticism.

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Antonia Vogler

University of Basel

[antonia.vogler@unibas.ch](mailto:antonia.vogler@unibas.ch)

### **Compassionate Connections: The Role of Perspective-Taking and Pronouns in Shared Reading Groups**

This paper explores pronoun choices in moments of perspective-taking. I will draw on data from a young adult Shared Reading group, collected in the UK for the SHARD (Shared Reading in the Age of Digitalization) project. I argue that perspective-taking in Shared Reading frequently extends beyond empathic responses into displays of compassion. Compassionate expressions

transcend empathic ones, as they entail a recognition of common humanity and shared community values (Etaywe et al., 2024, pp. 9f.). Moments of perspective-taking can reveal how community belonging and shared values are relationally enacted.

By considering other participants' or literary characters' perspectives and relating to their (sometimes painful) experiences, participants feel less isolated (Billington et al., 2023, pp. 7, 45). Feeling connected is continuously reported by Shared Reading participants and clearly linked to compassion, but has not yet been sufficiently investigated (Tara Brach, 2024).

To address this gap, I will conduct an analysis of participants' pronoun choices and their relational implications in moments of perspective-taking. Pronouns can serve a variety of functions (Stirling & Manderson, 2011, p. 1600). They may indicate personal involvement and identification, but can also create emotional distance, signal expertise or propose generalizations (where a link to common humanity can be drawn) (Stirling & Manderson, 2011, pp. 1588ff.; Kitagawa & Lehrer, 1990, pp. 744ff.). Analyzing perspective-taking is important as it reveals how Shared Reading fosters connection through literature.

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Ana Vogrinčič Čepič

University of Ljubljana

[Ana.VogrincicCepic@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:Ana.VogrincicCepic@ff.uni-lj.si)

### **The materiality of reading and its affective implications in people's everyday lives**

Numerous studies focus on media in everyday life (e.g. Ytre-Arne, 2023; Markham, 2019; Moores, 2000), but although reading is also a media practice, it is rarely considered as part of this agenda, or perhaps only sporadically, for example when it comes to reading news on cell phones. On the other hand, it is only with digitalization that studies of reading have begun to systematically consider the material specificities of reading behaviour and the effects of using different reading devices.

In my talk, I will focus on the ways in which books and other reading materials play a role in framing people's everyday pursuits and undertakings, not only through reading as such, but also through their material presence, which enables different kinds of engagement, emotionally as well as mentally and physically, depending on the device. I play with Felski's concept of 'the uses of literature' (2008) and rather speak of 'uses of reading' or even 'uses of books' that go beyond the mere act of reading.

My research is based on individual semi-structured interviews with people who have voluntarily agreed to talk about their reading behaviour, and is supplemented by findings from focus groups, including some with teenagers. In these so-called reading interviews, which I have been conducting for more than five years, I was interested in reading habits and practices, in how people read and what role reading plays in their lives. The aim of my research was to collect 'live' material to analyse reading as a behaviour embedded in time and space and realised in different kinds of rituals that change according to life situations and living conditions that always strongly influence our reading experiences. From the way my interviewees talk about books and reading, I reflect on how the latter helps to shape their daily environment.

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Ze Yu

University of Groningen

[z.yu@rug.nl](mailto:z.yu@rug.nl)

### **Global Narratives, Local Interpretations: A Comparative Study of Reader Response on Qidian and WebNovel**

The development of digital reading platforms has reshaped literary engagement, evolving from content-focused reading to interactive, community-driven spaces such as Archive of Our Own, Wattpad and WebNovel. These platforms not only facilitate reading but also foster social interactions, allowing for direct engagement between authors and readers [4], and fulfilling emotional and social needs for young readers and marginalized voices [9, 3, 2].

Digital Social Reading (DSR) has been widely explored, particularly in relation to reader response [5, 8]. However, existing research lacks cross-cultural comparisons, often focusing on authors as transcultural readers rather than investigating how readers from different backgrounds interpret the same narratives. This raises questions about how cultural settings shape the understanding of themes, characters, and plots, and whether reader response varies across linguistic and cultural boundaries [10]. Additionally, much of literary research prioritizes commercially successful Anglophone works, which are shaped by socio-

cultural biases such as classism, sexism, racism, and colonialism [1, 11, 6], limiting broader perspectives on reader engagement.

This study compares reader behavior across different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and examines how platform structures influence reader response on Qidian and WebNovel. Qidian, one of China's earliest digital reading platforms, introduced an innovative pay-to-read model and categorizes works across over 200 genres, accumulating more than 30million registered readers [7]. WebNovel, its international counterpart launched in 2017, initially provided English translations of Qidian works before expanding to support user-generated content. What makes those platforms stand out is not only the nature of its stories—designed for pleasure reading rather than classical literature—but also its unique categorization of "Male Lead" and "Female Lead" stories, which target distinct readerships .The platform has since attracted a substantial amount of global audiences, becoming one of the largest online social reading platforms.

To facilitate this study, we constructed a bilingual corpus by identifying translated novels available on WebNovel and mapping them to their original counterparts on Qidian. This process yielded 120 novels, of which 110 were ultimately included after accounting for copyright restrictions. The dataset includes metadata for comments, replies, and user profiles on both platforms, allowing us to analyze patterns of engagement, interaction, and linguistic diversity. Notably, WebNovel readers come from various countries, with English as the predominant language but with multilingual participation, whereas Qidian's readership is primarily native Chinese speakers or overseas Chinese users.

Enlightened by comparative analysis of book lists and tags on Goodreads and Douban [6] ,this study examines how readers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds engage with the same stories on Qidian and WebNovel. Specifically, we explore whether readers prioritize different aspects of storytelling, such as plot, characters, or setting, and how platform structures mediate these responses. In future studies, we will further investigate the comparative sentiments expressed by readers from different cultural backgrounds discussing the same topics, incorporating qualitative methods such as close reading to enhance the analysis. Overall, these insights into readers' responses highlight the critical role of cultural context and platform-specific dynamics in shaping reader interactions, interpretive strategies, and cognitive frameworks when engaging with narratives.

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